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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Solidarity and Support Initiative by SolidarityNow: Refugees on the side of locals after the Ianos cyclone in Karditsa**

#### ***Food and essential items distributed to the victims***

*Thessaloniki, September 30, 2020*

Karditsa is still counting its wounds after the catastrophic passage of cyclone Ianos, which left behind dead but also huge catastrophes -natural, social, economic-. **SolidarityNow, in a symbolic gesture of solidarity and support for the people affected**, has been collecting and donating essential items and dry food until the local community is back on its feet. **The initiative and assistance was undertaken, coordinated and delivered by refugees and asylum seekers, all beneficiaries of the organization, as a sign of reciprocity to the country that host them but also as a practical support to the residents of the area affected by the severe consequences of the cyclone.**

SolidarityNow's mandate is to support the most vulnerable members of society, without discrimination, through innovative social actions. This time, the initiative for this action was taken by the students (recognized refugees) of the HELIOS educational program implemented by the organization, and their teachers.

SolidarityNow in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and in the framework of the implementation of the HELIOS program organizes integration and information classes within its Integration Learning Centers established across Greece (Athens, Thessaloniki, Ioannina). As part of the recognized refugees' effort to learn Greek and make their first steps toward integration, their teachers explained them the difficulties faced by our fellow human beings in Thessaly due to the cyclone that hit the region.

The adult students were immediately sensitized and mobilized: in a very short period, food and essential items were collected by the students and teachers of the program at the three Integration Learning Centers of SolidarityNow and handed over to the Social Grocery Store of Karditsa. *The students were immediately activated feeling the inner need to give back to the Greek society that has supported them throughout their reception. In addition to the Greek lessons in the Learning Centers, SolidarityNow promotes and strengthens the feelings of responsibility and solidarity in these people, who, in the future, will be active members of our society. The organization supports the development of its students and encourages them to act independently and with*

*social sensitivities for a cohesive society.*

Through the active presence of the HELIOS program teams and additionally to the learning of the Greek language, our aim is to connect the Greek society with the refugee population, but also to strengthen and encourage the communication between the two. In order to achieve coexistence, understanding and acceptance, the meaning and importance of the "other" must be first cultivated in our consciousness.

*\*HELIOS Integration Learning Centers (ILC) is a program implemented by SolidarityNow with the cooperation of IOM Greece and the support of the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund of the European Union (DG HOME).*

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[SolidarityNow](#) was founded in Greece in 2013 to help the populations most affected by the economic and humanitarian crisis. From 2013 until today, **the organization has succeeded in supporting and helping through its activities and programs, more than 320,000 vulnerable people.** More than **64.000 people** - Greeks, refugees, migrants - have been supported by our Solidarity Centers in Athens and Thessaloniki. **The organization offered shelter and support to over 10,000 refugees and asylum seekers.** The strategic partners of the organization are: UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM Greece, OSF, EEA Grants and others.